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General Assembly

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Official Records

74th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 December 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 20 *(continued)* and 43

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(c) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/52/536)

Draft resolution (A/52/L.68)

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/52/358, A/52/682)

Draft resolution (A/52/L.68)

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/52/L.68.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/52/L.68 on Afghanistan under agenda items 20 (c) and 43. I would like to thank all those delegations that have participated in the joint effort leading to the presentation of today's text. The draft is also sponsored by the following Member States: Afghanistan, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uzbekistan. After our draft was submitted, the following States inscribed themselves as sponsors: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burundi, Chile, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Fiji, Hungary, Iceland, Malta, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

We welcome very much the fact that all the European Union (EU) countries are among the sponsors of the text. Since the draft resolution will not be put to the vote today, we invite other United Nations Member States that have not yet done so to join the group of sponsors.

Germany is grateful for its long-standing, friendly and close relations with the Afghan people. This is why we deeply regret that the past year has not brought war-torn Afghanistan closer to peace. The parties have continued to fight and they still seem to believe, against all evidence to the contrary, in the possibility of a military solution. While the fighting over the past 12 months has not changed the balance of power, it has caused further large-scale human suffering and economic destruction. Concerning human rights, especially those of women and girls, the situation remains appalling.

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With the intransigence of the Afghan parties and ongoing foreign interference fuelling the war, the United Nations has been and continues to be on what looks like a "mission impossible" in Afghanistan. We are grateful to the Secretary-General; to Mr. Norbert Holl, the outgoing head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, and his team; and to Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi for having lost neither commitment nor courage in these difficult circumstances. We welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to muster increased international support for bringing about peace in Afghanistan.

Germany will remain a strong and active supporter of the United Nations effort in Afghanistan. We also follow closely activities of influential Afghan individuals and organizations, within the framework of the so-called Frankfurt process, with a view to preparing the ground for an intra-Afghan dialogue. In terms of humanitarian assistance, Germany has consistently been one of the major donors to Afghanistan. Since 1993, we have provided more than DM 58 million to that country. We also contribute roughly one third to the assistance made available by the European Union. The Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, with whose statement on behalf of the European Union we fully associate ourselves, will point out some details with regard to EU-aid to Afghanistan.

Another pressing problem remains the indiscriminate use of landmines in a country where 10 million landmines pose a daily threat to the health and the lives of the civilian population. Since 1994, Germany has provided — in addition to the amount mentioned for humanitarian assistance — DM 8.4 million for mine-clearance activities. We will continue our support in 1998.

The draft resolution I am introducing today covers both humanitarian and political questions. In its humanitarian part — part A — it calls upon the international community to respond to the inter-agency consolidated appeal for emergency humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance to Afghanistan for the year 1998. It urges all Afghan parties to prevent the looting of United Nations premises and food supplies, not to hamper the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to grant access to those in need. It demands that the Afghan parties ensure the safety and full freedom of movement of United Nations personnel and other humanitarian personnel, as well as the security of their premises in Afghanistan. It denounces the continuing discrimination against women and girls, other human rights violations in Afghanistan and their adverse effects on relief and reconstruction programmes. It calls upon the Afghan parties to fully respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, in particular of women and girls. Finally, the draft resolution calls upon the organizations of the United Nations system to cooperate fully in the adoption and implementation of a principle-centred approach to the gender issue in Afghanistan, as recommended by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs.

In its political part — part B — the draft resolution expresses the conviction that there is no military solution to the Afghan conflict. It calls upon the Afghan parties to cease all armed hostilities immediately and to engage without preconditions in a political dialogue aimed at achieving a lasting political settlement. It condemns continued foreign military support to the Afghan parties and calls upon all States concerned to end such practices immediately. It encourages the Secretary-General to pursue the question of preliminary studies on the imposition of an effective arms embargo. It supports the call by the Secretary-General for the establishment of a solid international framework in order to address the external aspects of the Afghan question. In this respect, it calls upon all interested States and international organizations to use any influence they have in Afghanistan constructively and in support of and in close coordination with the United Nations.

The draft resolution expresses deep concern over the flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and requests the Secretary-General to continue to investigate fully reports of mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians and incidents of rape in Afghanistan. Preliminary reports reaching us from the region about the visit of Mr. Choong-Hyun Paik, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for Afghanistan, underline the urgency of this request. Furthermore, the draft resolution deplores the civilian casualties inflicted by the indiscriminate use of landmines and calls upon all Afghan parties to desist from such use.

Also in its political part, the draft resolution expresses appreciation for the efforts made by the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Norbert Holl, and the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi. The draft resolution renews the mandate of the United Nations Special Mission and charges it specifically with continuing its efforts to bring about an immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties and to institute a negotiating process leading to the formation of a fully representative, broad-based transitional government of national unity. Like

part A of the draft, part B denounces the continuing discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan and also demands that all Afghan parties ensure the safety and full freedom of movement of United Nations personnel.

In accordance with previous resolutions on Afghanistan, the draft resolution my country is introducing today states that the main responsibility for finding a peaceful solution to the conflict lies with the Afghan parties. At the same time, it follows a somewhat wider approach by also acknowledging the importance of the external aspects of the Afghan conflict. Thus, this draft resolution calls for a response from the Afghan parties as well as from the States with influence in Afghanistan. Peace would best be served if both the Afghan parties and the States with influence over them responded by making the United Nations their framework for a renewed and sincere effort aimed at a lasting political settlement of the conflict, based on the principles contained in the text before us.

We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. The General Assembly would thus be sending a strong message to the Afghan parties and the States with influence in Afghanistan — a message saying that we unanimously and strongly support the efforts of the Secretary-General, his Special Envoy and the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan; a message saying that we want the Afghan parties to renounce the military option and want the States with influence in Afghanistan to use their influence constructively in support of the United Nations; and a message saying that we continue to care about the Afghan civilian population, its human rights and its suffering after 18 years of war.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The situation in Afghanistan continues to be a source of grave concern to the international community in general and to the countries of the region in particular. The vicious cycle of violence and fratricide continues to take a heavy toll on the innocent and defenceless people, with no end in sight to this meaningless bloodshed. As the Secretary-General states in his report contained in paragraph 53 of document A/52/682,

> "Afghanistan's civil war has continued to exact a staggering toll in terms of human lives and suffering as well as material destruction."

This devastating war has not only inflicted enormous damages to the country's infrastructure, taking it many years backward, but has also caused tremendous hardships to the people, who are in desperate need of food, medicine and other humanitarian necessities.

Adding to the misery is the imposition of harsh restrictions against the Afghan people, in particular women and children. Discrimination against religious and ethnic groups has further exacerbated the crisis. Unfortunately, these restrictions are being imposed in the name of Islam. As a great and divine religion, Islam has never prescribed these policies and practices, which are indeed in total contradiction with its lofty principles.

Equally disturbing is the illegal movement of criminals and the illicit traffic in arms and narcotics in that country, which is creating a state of insecurity and instability in the region and beyond. The continuation and prolongation of the conflict in Afghanistan has indeed provided the grounds for increasing these illegal activities, and, unfortunately, some warring factions rely on drug trafficking as a source of their income.

A clear and unquestionable lesson drawn from the chronic crisis in Afghanistan is that this conflict cannot and will not be settled through military operations. Such an obvious reality, to our great regret, has yet to be realized by certain warring factions in Afghanistan. The Afghan leaders should understand by now that only through dialogue and understanding can they overcome their differences and rebuild their ruined country.

As a neighbouring country, the Islamic Republic of Iran has continuously and wholeheartedly endeavoured to bring about a negotiated settlement to the crisis. In our communications with all the Afghan parties, we have always emphasized that a military solution is only an illusion and that a political solution must begin with the establishment of a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities, followed by negotiations among all Afghan groups towards the establishment of a broad-based government representing all Afghans. In all of our peacekeeping efforts, we have always reiterated the necessity of coordination with the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). We are convinced that only through the coordinated action of regional countries, the United Nations and the OIC can one impress upon the Afghan leaders the need to leave aside their differences and start a genuine intra-Afghan dialogue.

Earlier this month, in a continuation of our contacts with all factions, Afghan leaders, commanders and religious figures were invited to the Iranian city of

Isfahan to promote political dialogue and peace among themselves. The Isfahan conference adopted a resolution and sent a message to the participants of the eighth OIC summit in Tehran which calls, *inter alia*, for the establishment of an immediate ceasefire and the beginning of an intra-Afghan dialogue.

Last week, the eighth Islamic summit in Tehran adopted a resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. The summit, while recalling the relevant United Nations resolutions on Afghanistan, *inter alia*, calls upon the Afghan parties to establish an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. The resolution further calls for respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and for non-interference in its internal affairs. It emphasizes the need for continued close coordination of efforts between the OIC and the United Nations in promoting a peaceful political settlement in Afghanistan by setting up a credible intra-Afghan mechanism. The resolution also encourages the continuing cooperation between the efforts of the OIC and the United Nations Special Mission.

As the Chairman of the OIC for the next three years, the Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to find an amicable solution to the crisis in tandem with all peacemaking efforts, particularly those of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the OIC. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for its part, will also continue to render humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. Our practice of the past 19 years has been to take numerous measures to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people. These measures have ranged from hosting millions of Afghan refugees to building hospitals and medical centres and providing food and non-food assistance. This is indicative of the fact that we cannot be indifferent to the plight of our Afghan brethren, who have been suffering from a senseless war. It is incumbent upon the international community to respond favourably to the humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan. The Afghan factions, for their part, should put the interests of their people above all and refrain from placing deliberate restrictions on the access of humanitarian organizations to some parts of the country.

Finally, we would like to reiterate once again our support for the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and the efforts made by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

Mr. Sharma (India): Since the General Assembly last considered the situation in Afghanistan on 13 December 1996 and adopted resolution 51/195, the political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated further. The civil war continues to exact a staggering toll in terms of human lives and suffering as well as material destruction. I should like to convey our deep concern at this tragic situation for the people of Afghanistan. The continuing war has resulted in immense suffering for them for the last two years. We are saddened at the continuance of the fratricidal conflict in Afghanistan, with which we have an ancient historical association. Developments in Afghanistan also have a direct bearing on the security of countries in the region, and peace and stability in Afghanistan is in the security interest of all countries in the region, including India.

It is unfortunate that the fighting and polarization of forces has taken place on ethnic lines, thus making it more complicated to find a peaceful political solution. The Secretary-General, in his report contained in document A/52/682, has noted with concern that the deepening division of the country along ethnic lines, reinforced by external military and political support, continues to inhibit efforts to engender political dialogue among the factions. It should be the endeavour of all concerned to ensure that this tendency — this polarization — is not exacerbated. The maintenance of the structure of Afghanistan as a State is important for the stability of the entire region. There is an Afghan national personality which transcends ethnic consciousness. The efforts of the international community should be to sustain and strengthen that personality and not to sharpen ethnic cleavages. This has to be carefully understood and followed by all who have a genuine interest in the welfare of Afghanistan. Only a genuine power-sharing arrangement in which all Afghanistan people have representation can bring a lasting peace to that country. Peace in Afghanistan should not be held hostage to considerations of strategy but should be based on consideration of the well-being of its people.

We agree with the Secretary-General's observations on inter-Afghan talks and support his efforts to be in contact with the warring parties with a view to preparing the ground for an intra-Afghan dialogue. We sincerely hope such a dialogue will be launched soon and that it will focus at first on a ceasefire and the demilitarization of Kabul, to be followed by political negotiations leading to the establishment of a broad-based representative government.

The success of intra-Afghan dialogue requires the immediate cessation of all foreign interference and intervention in Afghanistan. We believe that such

interference and intervention continue to be the main obstacles to any efforts for achieving genuine peace in Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan deserve an opportunity to give peace a chance free from such outside interference. The unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan must be respected by all.

We appreciate the efforts that the Secretary-General has made over the past year in this field. Mr. Norbert Holl, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, who have worked tirelessly for achieving tangible progress, are also worthy of our commendation. Our commitment to the efforts of the United Nations in achieving a durable peace in Afghanistan is total. We believe, however, that international diplomatic efforts on Afghanistan cannot and should not be confined to only a limited group of countries but should take advantage of the positive and constructive role which can be played by those countries that have an interest in, an influence on and can contribute to peace in Afghanistan.

Last year when this subject was discussed in the General Assembly, my delegation expressed concern about reports of terrorist training camps and the problem of illicit production of and trade in narcotics. These are problems which affect the neighbouring countries, as well as those farther away from Afghanistan. In his report the Secretary-General has rightly described the civil war in Afghanistan as a fire which is unlikely to remain indefinitely confined to Afghanistan. He has also rightly warned that the fire is already spreading beyond the borders of Afghanistan, posing a serious threat to the region and beyond in the shape of terrorism, banditry, narcotics trafficking, refugee flows and increasing ethnic and sectarian tension. The recent attack on tourists in Luxor, Egypt, by terrorists reportedly trained in such camps and the report that the bulk of the narcotics reaching Europe originates in Afghanistan illustrate the magnitude of the problem and the urgency of finding a peaceful settlement of the civil war in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is home to an ancient civilization. The deterioration of its cultural heritage, which is a common legacy of all mankind, is for us a matter of grave concern. We call upon all parties to the conflict to take effective steps to protect and safeguard the cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

We are concerned at the violation and abuse of human rights in Afghanistan. We particularly deplore the violence and discrimination against women and their deprivation of their human rights. We join other Members of the United Nations in calling for measures to ensure effective participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political and social life in Afghanistan. We also call for ensuring the right of women and girls to education at all levels, equal access for them to health facilities and respect for their right to work.

The Secretary-General's report on emergency assistance to Afghanistan, contained in document A/52/536, highlights the alarming dimensions of the humanitarian crisis and the vital need for rebuilding the social and economic infrastructure of Afghanistan. We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that against the background of an unpredictable political and military situation in Afghanistan, where daily clashes continue, humanitarian relief assistance remains critical for the survival of the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict. With winter having already set in, the humanitarian situation has worsened, and there is an urgent need to respond immediately to those who are most in need. It is disturbing to note that the supply of humanitarian assistance to affected people in certain regions is being hampered for political advantage.

Despite serious resource constraints, India has consistently contributed to the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, both bilaterally and through United Nations agencies. The humanitarian assistance supplied by India includes foodstuffs, medicine, clothing and so on. We recently sent tea and medicine to Mazar-i-Sharif. We conducted a month-long camp in Kabul during August and September 1996 for fitting Afghan amputees with artificial limbs. Over 1,100 such limbs were fitted. We set up another such camp in Sheberghan, northern Afghanistan in May 1997. However, due to sudden changes in the situation there, this had to be called off prematurely.

India has pledged to provide humanitarian assistance through the United Nations, in addition to bilateral assistance, to the tune of 33 million rupees this year. We remain committed to continued provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

India and Afghanistan have close civilizational affinities and are bound by ties of brotherhood, friendship and cooperation in many areas. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations in Afghanistan and will continue to play a positive and constructive role, as hitherto, in international diplomatic efforts to restore peace and tranquillity in Afghanistan.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation favours a political settlement in Afghanistan on the basis of the decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the maintenance of the unity and territorial integrity of that country.

We note with concern that the current situation in Afghanistan destabilizes the situation throughout the whole of the Central Asian region and beyond. We are concerned at the constant threat to the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States coming from Afghanistan; the flow of narcotics and contraband weapons; reports that reach us about gross violations of humanitarian law by the warring factions, including mass killings of civilians and prisoners of war; the blockade by the Taliban of the central regions of Afghanistan populated by the Hazara people, and the continuing large-scale violations of human rights, particularly the rights of women and children.

We share the concern, as stated in the Secretary-General's latest report on Afghanistan, that despite the tireless efforts of the United Nations to establish peace between the warring Afghan factions, prospects for a settlement in the country remain bleak.

The Russian Federation resolutely opposes any foreign interference in Afghan internal affairs. We are convinced that a continuation of the conflict is to a large extent the consequence of external interference, including the direct participation of foreign military personnel in hostilities. We are prepared to discuss specific practical measures to ban or limit deliveries of arms to Afghanistan. We are convinced that these possible measures should apply universally to all parties to the conflict, to the full range of military *matériel* and to all the air and land borders of Afghanistan.

Recently, certain encouraging signs have emerged in the development of the situation in and around Afghanistan. Direct contacts are taking place between the Taliban and individual representatives of the governing coalition. Work is being stepped up within the framework of the group of neighbours and friends of Afghanistan, established on the initiative of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdan Brahimi. We must see to it that these trends are strengthened and that the way is cleared for specific, tangible steps that would make it possible to move to address in practical terms the question of the cessation of the armed conflict and the start of a political dialogue aimed at national reconciliation and the establishment in Afghanistan of a broad-based, fully representative government. Such steps could include, in our view, the simultaneous declaration of a ceasefire by all factions, the renunciation by all parties to the conflict of the use of force in addressing Afghanistan's internal problems and the parties' commitment to the goal of national reconciliation and the preservation of Afghanistan as an independent, sovereign and unified State.

In principle, Russia supports the idea of holding an international conference on Afghanistan. We believe that such a conference should be well organized and be based on agreements reached by the parties.

Ensuring that the United Nations plays a pivotal and leading role in the peace process as an impartial, internationally recognized mediator is a prerequisite for successful progress towards peace in Afghanistan. The presidential statement on Afghanistan issued earlier today by the Security Council makes this same appeal. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

Given the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, there is clearly a need to continue donor assistance to the population of the country, irrespective of ethnicity or religion. We support the appeal to the international community to provide the population of Afghanistan with comprehensive humanitarian assistance. We support the coordination of the work of the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in this area with other efforts to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan and to secure conditions for the voluntary and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The Russian Federation has traditionally provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. For 1997 and 1998, this assistance amounts to more than $500,000. We intend to continue to render humanitarian assistance to that country and, in particular, to cooperate in demining efforts in Afghanistan by helping train Afghan personnel, considering the participation of volunteer Russian specialists in demining and providing minefield maps to representatives of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, on the condition that such maps are made available to the Afghan parties only after the conclusion of a truce between all the Afghan parties and guarantees of a non-resumption of hostilities have been given.

At the same time, we believe that an increase in donor assistance must be linked to the practical readiness of the warring Afghan factions to participate in the peace process, as well as to the observance of human rights.

More strenuous efforts to provide assistance for the social and economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan will be possible only after the Afghan factions cease hostilities and a transition to peace has begun. The attainment of peace would open up prospects not only for a sharp and substantial increase in donor assistance, but also for the practical implementation of long-term plans to develop the economy and all essential areas of life in Afghanistan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): For almost two decades, Afghanistan has been torn apart by civil strife. The Afghan people, the principal victims of this strife, continue to suffer atrocities and social and economic hardships that would seem to test the very limits of human endurance. Engulfed by violence and denied their fundamental human rights, they have neither the opportunity nor the freedom to pursue their livelihoods or to rebuild their country.

The warring parties must recognize that the conflict will not be settled on the battlefield. Any thought of a conclusive military victory by one party or the other is an illusion. Japan calls upon them to lay down their arms and, in a genuine spirit of reconciliation, to cooperate with each other to work out a ceasefire and a peace plan. The future of their country lies in their hands. The sooner the conflicting parties realize this, the sooner the people of Afghanistan can embark upon the work of national recovery and reconstruction.

Although the enmity between the Afghan factions is deep, it is the interference by parties outside the country that has prolonged the fighting. Once again, I would call on all States, particularly neighbouring States, to abide by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and respect the independence, sovereignty and national integrity of Afghanistan and to terminate immediately all assistance, military as well as financial, to the warring parties.

The Government of Japan is gravely concerned about the flagrant disregard for human rights in Afghanistan, particularly the rights of women and girls. By denying women the right to participate in all aspects of society, the Taliban and other parties to the conflict are hampering humanitarian assistance activities and impeding the economic and social development of the country. Japan strongly urges all the parties to respect and promote the human rights of all the people of Afghanistan.

Another pressing humanitarian issue is the millions of anti-personnel landmines that have been laid in Afghanistan, which every day claim new victims, many of them innocent women and children. While the Government of Japan continues to assist in mine-clearance activities in Afghanistan, it appeals to the warring parties to refrain from deploying new mines.

The international community must not abandon the Afghan people. To do so would be not only morally unjustifiable, but also dangerously short-sighted, for the situation in Afghanistan has implications that reach far beyond its borders. Not only does it destabilize the region, but it hampers international efforts to combat such problems as drug trafficking and international terrorism. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to address the situation in Afghanistan with renewed determination to bring the conflict to an end. Lip service is not enough.

The Government of Japan has consistently supported the activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan under the skilful leadership of Mr. Norbert Holl. I should like on this occasion to express, on behalf of the Government of Japan, my sincere appreciation for the dedication with which he continues to discharge his important mandate. At the same time, I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Brahimi, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his contribution. The achievement of a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan depends to a very large degree on the cooperation and support that all the parties concerned, including neighbouring countries, extend to his efforts. Indeed, the importance of giving Mr. Brahimi our united and steadfast backing cannot be overestimated.

The establishment and observation of a ceasefire is not synonymous with the achievement of peace. Genuine and lasting peace will be achieved only through a continuous process of national reconciliation and economic reconstruction efforts. I would call on all interested parties to cooperate with the United Nations in formulating a comprehensive strategy and effective framework under which these efforts may be pursued. At the same time, all Member States, speaking with one voice, should exert their influence on the Afghan parties on behalf of peace.

In closing, let me reiterate that, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the Government of Japan remains ready to host a meeting of the Afghan parties, to be mediated by the United Nations, for the purpose of exploring all possible avenues towards a negotiated settlement. The people of Afghanistan have suffered for too long. It is high time that they were given the chance to live in peace, dignity and freedom and to enjoy the rights that are guaranteed to all peoples under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose fiftieth anniversary we observed in this Hall just last week.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan): May I begin by expressing my sincere thanks to the German delegation for its efforts to coordinate the work of preparing the draft resolution before us today on Afghanistan.

We are also grateful to the other sponsors of the draft resolution and wish to express our thanks to all those countries that are providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. I should also like to refer to the presidential statement on Afghanistan, issued by the Security Council today, 16 December, as document S/PRST/1997/55, and to announce that my delegation welcomes the statement and that the Islamic State of Afghanistan is willing to cooperate with the United Nations in accordance with the terms of the statement.

I should also like to say that the Islamic Summit held in Tehran adopted a resolution on Afghanistan on 12 December. The Islamic State of Afghanistan welcomes the resolution, which contains the same basic points as those contained in the draft resolution now before the General Assembly.

Last year, on 17 December 1996, members of the Assembly extensively debated the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. Every three months this year, we have received reports from the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) about developments in Afghanistan. This year we have also received two reports from the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Security Council held an orientation debate on the question of Afghanistan in its 3765th meeting, on 14 and 15 April 1997.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, while expressing gratitude for these reports and all other endeavours aimed at achieving a lasting peace in Afghanistan, voices its dismay and disappointment over the lack of appropriate measures in response to the suffering of our countrymen and the extensive violation of human rights, particularly of women and girls, in defiance of all international standards and norms, as reflected in the draft resolution to be adopted.

This year, unlike in previous years, we need not speak about the intervention and involvement of foreign military and paramilitary personnel in Afghanistan on the basis of newspaper articles and statements by writers or scholars. Also, at this session, we need not speak about the intransigent attitude of the Taliban by referring to the statements made by its opponents. Likewise, we need not speak about the violation of human rights by the Taliban as reported by journalists. On the contrary, this year, we prefer to point to the official reports of the Secretary-General and of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. These reports amply reflect the mercenary nature of the Taliban and expose their inhumane and unjust behaviour in deliberate defiance of international human rights instruments. The United Nations reports attest to the physical presence of foreign nationals alongside the Taliban in the Afghan war fronts. Against the background of the continued occurrence of crimes of aggression and grave violations of human rights and humanitarian laws, all subject to punishment, the United Nations has remained either silent or incapable of taking necessary and practical measures.

Let me begin with the clear manifestations of the presence of foreign elements in Afghanistan. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights reports in document A/52/493 of 16 October 1997 the existence of Pakistani nationals captured by the armed forces of Afghanistan. Paragraphs 12 of the report cites the presence of Pakistani nationals in the May 1997 fighting in Mazar-i-Sharif and, after the subsequent Taliban defeat, among the prisoners of war. Paragraph 48 indicates the killing of some 200 Pakistanis in Afghanistan during that battle. And paragraph 68 reports that about 550 Pakistanis were taken prisoner after the Taliban defeat in the north of Afghanistan.

Paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report dated 17 September 1997 (A/52/358), referring to the physical existence of foreign fighters, states,

> "a number of prisoners interviewed by UNSMA personnel in Maimana, the capital of Faryab Province in north-western Afghanistan, and in Bamyan freely admitted that they came from various areas in Pakistan".

In paragraph 18 of the Secretary-General's report dated 14 November 1997, (A/52/682), the Secretary-General states:

> "United Nations employees also reported an encounter with unidentified foreign military training unit of several hundred persons near Kabul."

These facts represent blatant breaches of recognized principles of international law, provisions of the Charter, numerous United Nations resolutions on Afghanistan, as well as resolutions on terrorism and mercenaries. The aggressive policy of expansionism, which poses a grave threat to international peace and security and continues to victimize the Afghan nation and wreak much havoc on the country, seems to be underestimated by the United Nations. Well into the third year of aggression, only now are United Nations reports confirming facts clearly related to Article 39 of the Charter, stipulating that the Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to peace, breach of peace or act of aggression and shall make recommendations and decide on measures to be taken.

Once should ask why, with such clear and abundant facts, the United Nations has remained silent. Is it due to this silence that our people continue to suffer?

I will now proceed to address the intransigent attitude of the Taliban towards the peace process in Afghanistan.

In paragraph 7 of his report dated 16 March 1997 (A/51/838) the Secretary-General stated,

> "The Taliban, judging both from their words and from their activities on the ground, appear determined to gain military and political control of the whole of Afghanistan and to establish their vision of an Islamic State."

Paragraphs 8 and 10 of the report dated 16 June 1997 (A/51/929) clearly indicate that it is the intention of the Taliban to conquer all Afghanistan by force.

Paragraph 11 of the same report states,

> "The Taliban's ambition to capture the north of Afghanistan and to gain control of the entire country further aggravated the concerns of a number of countries in the region, many of which view this as a serious threat to their borders and to the peace and security of the region."

The report of the Secretary-General dated 14 November 1997 (A/52/682) describes in paragraph 15 the concern resulting from

> "the Taliban's refusal to start negotiations with the Northern Alliance as a whole without preconditions".

These are the facts about the bellicose, obstinate, rejectionist and intransigent attitude of the Taliban, which is aided and assisted by the presence of agents of the cross-border military intelligence services and attested to by the physical presence of foreign military and paramilitary prisoners in Afghanistan. On the other side of this conflict are patriots who are defending their homeland against foreign domination and oppose the installation of a puppet regime in Afghanistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, while defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, has declared its readiness to solve the actual conflict in the country by negotiation. It is unjust and unfair to blame all Afghan leaders alike and to equate the Islamic State of Afghanistan to the Taliban self-declared "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". It is inequitable to reprobate and qualify as warlords those who are fighting for the independence of Afghanistan — and not for personal and material gain — and to equate them with those who are serving the interests of a foreign country by inviting foreign military personnel. The latter have blackened the name of human civilization. To equate justice with injustice simply means siding with injustice.

Let us take note that no concrete measures, including the imposition of sanctions or exertion of pressure, have been proposed, let alone enforced by the United Nations, against the intransigent Taliban or their extremist cross-border supporters.

Allow me to briefly address the subject of human rights in Taliban-controlled areas. I am sure most of the Member States of the United Nations are aware of the Taliban attitude; their treatment of women and girls, including exclusion from school and work; the interdiction of music, cinema and television; their mutilation of human beings; the forcible displacement of the civilian population; and much more, as extensively reported by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Paik in his two reports of 1997. The killing of civilians, including women and children, in two villages near Mazar-i-Sharif was recently reflected in the September 1997 Amnesty International report and was investigated on 12 December

1997 by a United Nations investigation team that visited the villages.

It is worth mentioning that before the occupation of Kabul by the Taliban, as witnessed and documented by the Special Rapporteur (A/50/567, 16 October 1995), two years ago, Islamic laws and regulations prevailed. Women enjoyed equal rights with men in economic, social and cultural fields. Female students accounted for 50 per cent of Kabul University enrolment and 30 per cent of the faculty. Women accounted for 65 per cent of the labour force in Kabul, 70 per cent of teachers, 50 per cent of civil servants and 40 per cent of medical doctors. Forty-five thousand war widows earned a living through food-for-work programmes, but the gender apartheid imposed by the Taliban has created, not only in Kabul but in other parts of Afghanistan, misery and destitution. Paragraphs 43, 44, 53, 55, 68, 109, 112 and 118 of Mr. Paik's report cite examples regarding an array of Taliban violations of human rights that speak for themselves.

To make known the mentality and ideology of the Taliban towards women, I would like to quote from the recent report of Mr. Paik [A/52/493]. Paragraph 95 indicates,

> "a Taliban leader had stated that there were only two places for Afghan women: in her husband's house and in the graveyard."

This retrograde and obscurantist vision does not have any relation to the genuine and noble precepts of Islam, nor with the traditions of all Afghan ethnic groups.

Paragraph 55 of the same report states that a so-called cleric belonging to the Taliban had raped and killed five women, whose bodies were thrown into the river. His execution by public hanging was reported to have been announced three times. The cleric is said

> "to have been released for being a good Talib."

This is the situation. The draft resolution we shall have to adopt speaks about incidents of rape.

The Taliban and their instigators preach that Afghans who do not submit to the Taliban are not adequate Muslims. The Taliban are busy punishing men who trim their beards or lack long beards, a matter not even mentioned in the Holy Koran. Meanwhile, the Taliban overlook the verse of the Koran that says, and I will quote it in Arabic:

(*spoke in Arabic*)

> "The Believers are but
> A single Brotherhood:
> So make peace and
> Reconciliation between your
> Two (contending) brothers". [*The Holy Koran*, XLIX:10]

(*spoke in English*)

They never teach this verse of the Koran. Over beards, the Taliban are willing to attack the dignity of their fellow countrymen. They claim such decrees constitute the Islamic shariah.

On 11 December 1997, the joint declaration of the Summit meeting of the 55-member Organization of the Islamic Conference called for

> "full respect for the dignity and the rights of Muslim women and enhancement of their role in all aspects of social life in accordance with Islamic principles."

The Islamic principles are quite clear. Learning and the acquisition of knowledge are the duty of every Muslim man and woman, as stated in authentic collections of prophetic traditions, or Hadith. Now the assembly of Muslim world leaders has called for the restoration of Muslim women's role in collective social life. This is the expression of the noble aims of the Islamic global family, or Ummah, in the modern world. For the past three years, in many parts of Afghanistan, especially in urban areas, the Taliban have done just the contrary by antagonizing and obstructing the role of women in all aspects of social, educational and cultural life. Such an attitude will lead to a cultural and economic regression of the Islamic community. Afghan women have the right to live in the same manner as half a billion other Muslim women throughout the world.

The draft resolution on which the General Assembly has to take action urges the Afghan parties to agree on a ceasefire. I have the instructions from my Government to say "yes" to the proposal. The draft resolution, in the preamble of part B, reconfirms Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) of 22 October 1996, which requires the demilitarization of the city of Kabul, a step considered significant and vital by the Islamic State of Afghanistan for the peace process and the establishment of an all-Afghan transitional administration. The Islamic

State of Afghanistan in turn, proposes also the demilitarization not only of Kabul but of all major cities and towns throughout Afghanistan, the security of which can be provided by locally recruited police units.

The General Assembly has already unanimously adopted — last Friday, 12 December — a resolution entitled "Situation of human rights in Afghanistan". Paragraph 7 of the operative part reads as follows:

> "*Urges* all the Afghan parties to work closely and cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan with a view to achieving a comprehensive political solution leading to the cessation of armed confrontation and the establishment of a democratic Government elected through free and fair elections, based on the right to self-determination of the people of Afghanistan". [resolution 52/145, para. 7]

The Islamic State of Afghanistan considers that resolution legally and practically as important as the draft resolution which is being studied now here today and fully agrees with it. The peace process must aim at the administrative unity of Afghanistan, with one adequately broad-based Government.

However, the so-called Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan would certainly make a number of self-fulfilling arguments against this draft resolution and the view urged by the General Assembly. The "Islamic Emirate" proclaimed by the Taliban on 26 October 1997 was an attempt to formalize the position as "Head of State" of Mullah Umar, the leader of the Taliban, elected, with foreign funding, by a group of clerics as Emir-al-Momineen, or Leader of the Faithful in April 1996, in order to make his rigid and inflexible approach an example not only for Afghans but for all Muslims. The proclamation can be considered a political scheme to paralyse the peace process. It runs contrary to any kind of initiative aimed at establishing a coalition Government or a power-sharing mechanism in a transitional or permanent Government, and to any other United Nations proposal, such as that of holding elections, as well as to the principle of self-determination. Obviously, an emir can be only an absolute commander to whom all the faithful, both within and outside the country's borders, must submit.

On 11 December 1997 the Defence Minister and two leaders of the United Islamic and National Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan met to consider reshuffling the Government cabinet in such a way as to broaden the Administration's base (A/51/925, 16 June 1997). The principle of a negotiated political settlement was reiterated, stressing

> "the belief in the principle of dialogue, negotiation and understanding between all Afghan parties involved, leading to the solution of the Afghan problem."

The Front, as a protector of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, has started taking genuine confidence-building measures by releasing a significant number of Taliban prisoners, without reciprocity by the Taliban.

The Government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan expresses its sincere appreciation for the efforts made by Mr. Norbert Holl, head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. It also highly values the endeavours of Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

Let me end by briefly touching on the issue of the arms embargo. Ten years ago, during the Geneva talks on Afghanistan, when the former Soviet Union was still a party to the conflict, the possibility and practicality of an arms embargo was discussed at length and in depth for months. The implementation of an embargo was found to be an extremely intractable matter, particularly along Afghanistan's eastern and southern boundaries.

It is time the current unrealistic view of the arms embargo were modified or reversed. Instead of trying to impose an arms embargo through an impractical monitoring of airports and extremely long and porous borders, let us seriously and firmly persuade the elements and countries that are sending arms to put a halt to the transfers. This will be not only in their own interest but also in the interest of the Afghan people and of regional economic cooperation.

Before concluding, let me note that we are a sponsor of the draft resolution which is under consideration today and which I hope will be adopted unanimously. The text constitutes our commitment to the peace process. Our heart and mind, words and deeds, are all in favour of this General Assembly draft resolution. Let us turn to God and hope and pray that by 21 March 1998, the first day of the Afghan new year, peace will have come to lighten the hearts of millions of distressed Afghan souls.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe that are associated with the European Union — namely, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia — as well as the associated country of Cyprus and the country of the European Free Trade Association and member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

The persistence of the conflict in Afghanistan continues to be of concern to the international community. The ongoing civil war continues to cause the loss of many lives as well as considerable material damage. An endless tragedy is unfolding before us, in which the aspirations of the Afghan people to peace are systematically and continuously betrayed by leaders and warlords who are motivated by selfish ambitions and a thirst for power. The dangers brought by this war constitute a serious threat to regional stability and have led the international community to intensify its efforts in the search for a peaceful solution.

The European Union calls once again on all parties to put an immediate end to the hostilities and to avoid renewed destruction and loss of human life. We encourage the search for a peaceful solution through negotiations leading to a political solution capable of bringing peace and stability back to the country. Only negotiations in good faith and cooperation between the parties can bring about a stable State to which the Afghan people can freely give their support.

No society can reach an acceptable degree of peace, justice and stability without guaranteeing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The European Union recalls, in this context, Security Council resolution 1076 (1996), which condemns human rights violations in Afghanistan. The European Union cannot tolerate discrimination based on race or religion, nor can it accept the discrimination between men and women practised by the Afghan parties. The European Union recalls the great importance it attaches to respect for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, an instrument officially signed by Afghanistan. The European Union has also condemned recent restrictive measures put into effect by the Taliban leaders in the fields of employment for women and education for girls. We fully support the statements of the Secretary-General and other United Nations representatives in this regard, in particular Security Council's presidential statement issued this very morning.

The European Union notes with deep concern the reports about mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians and incidents of rape in Afghanistan, and supports the Secretary-General's request to continue the full investigation of such reports.

The European Union remains concerned by the threat to regional stability caused by the prolongation of the Afghan conflict. The central role of the United Nations in this context must be fully recognized by all, and we call upon all concerned countries to support the Secretary-General's mediation efforts. The European Union believes that an immediate ceasefire in the field is necessary in order to initiate an inter-Afghan dialogue in the best conditions and under the auspices of the United Nations.

The European Union condemns foreign interference, which only prolongs the armed conflict and impedes the search for a political solution. We call upon all third parties to the conflict to cease such interference and to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, as well as the right of the Afghan people freely to choose their future.

In this context, the European Union recalls that on 17 December 1996 it imposed an embargo on arms, ammunition and military equipment intended for Afghanistan, and it calls upon the international community to cease the delivery of arms, equipment and other resources to the various Afghan factions. We also call upon the Afghan parties themselves to halt the use of landmines, which take a toll of many innocent victims among the civilian population.

Furthermore, the European Union reiterates its deep concern over the massive and illegal production of drugs on Afghan territory, as well as the training of terrorists, practices that have serious destabilizing effects well beyond the region.

The safety of international personnel engaged in the provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance must be ensured. The European Union is the principal donor of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. In 1997 it contributed a total of ECU 82 million to provide assistance to the entire Afghan population without regard to gender, ethnicity or religion. We support the position of principle of United Nations organs on the question of gender equity in Afghanistan. In addition, the European Union calls upon all donor countries and on all humanitarian agencies better to coordinate their efforts in

order to assist the suffering population in Afghanistan in an efficient and coordinated manner. We also call for free access for humanitarian convoys throughout the territory of Afghanistan and for the rights and immunities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies under international law to be fully respected by the various factions.

In conclusion, the European Union would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its continuing support for the efforts being made by the United Nations, in particular those of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. We call upon all Afghan parties to cooperate closely with the Special Mission, whose only goal is to act as an impartial mediator for the re-establishment of peace in the country. Furthermore, we welcome the continuation of consultations between the Special Mission and neighbouring and other countries, as well as with regional institutions.

In this context, the European Union supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at bringing together interested countries to seek a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Lastly, we would especially like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for his untiring efforts which led to the conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report, and to the head of the Special Mission, Mr. Norbert Holl, and his devoted team.

The European Union supports the draft resolution before us, of which the 15 members of the Union are sponsors.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First, I should like to express the delegation of Egypt's gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and excellent report he has submitted on the situation in Afghanistan. The report succinctly and frankly explores the reasons why the Afghan crisis continues to exist.

I should also like to express my delegation's appreciation for all the efforts made by the United Nations to reach a settlement of the Afghan question. I should also like thank the Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

The report sets out in detail the deteriorating military situation, which reflects the intransigence of the warring factions that are systematically seeking to gain control through military means. The report clearly reflects the thirst for power of the faction leaders and their determination to dominate, in disregard of the real will of the Afghan people, who have suffered the horrors of war for more than 18 years.

In its observations and conclusions the report notes the main reasons for the prolongation of the crisis, stemming basically from the behaviour of the Afghans and to foreign interference that provides financial and military support to the rival factions.

My delegation agrees with paragraph 42 of the report [A/52/682], which notes the striking contradiction in the behaviour of certain countries that denounce foreign interference while fanning the flames of the conflict by providing arms, money and other resources, in flagrant violation of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling for an end to such military interference in Afghanistan. The constantly worsening situation has transformed Afghanistan into a centre of activities that represent serious threats to that region and others through increased terrorist and other illegal activities, narcotics trafficking, refugee flows and ethnic sectarian tension with incalculable consequences. As we all know, many countries have, like Egypt, been the victim of acts of terrorism whose perpetrators were trained in Afghanistan.

Egypt took an active part in the third meeting of member States with influence in Afghanistan, convened by the Secretary-General last October. Here too, we agree with the conclusions of the report noting the concern of those States at the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan and its serious implications for regional peace and stability. In this connection, the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), held from 9 to 11 December at Tehran, adopted a resolution that detailed the situation in Afghanistan and emphasized the desire of all OIC members to see the return of peace to Afghanistan. We would stress here the untiring efforts that the OIC is making in this connection to complement those made by the United Nations.

It is distressing to witness the continuing suffering of the Afghan people caused by the millions of landmines that have been laid throughout the country and by the serious shortage of foodstuffs, which can only be made worse by the arrival of winter, not to mention the other situations linked to the persistent problem of refugees and displaced persons. All of these factors combined make it vitally important that the international community mobilize its efforts to achieve a rapid settlement while continuing to provide needed humanitarian and material assistance — in other words, we need a comprehensive

strategy for rehabilitation to go with the current ongoing efforts to settle the problem of Afghanistan.

Egypt agrees with the view expressed in paragraph 45 of the Secretary-General's report, which speaks of the need for the establishment of a solid international framework to address the external aspects of the Afghan question and provide an opportunity to study the question of foreign interference in a more coherent manner.

We also agree with the Secretary-General on the need for a number of Governments that have influence on Afghanistan to use their influence on the Afghan parties in a positive, constructive way in order to reach a peaceful settlement.

In practical terms, the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan is limited to providing a means of hiding the inaction of the international community as a whole.

With regard to imposing an effective embargo on the provision of arms to the warring Afghan factions, my delegation supports consideration by the United Nations of a compulsory arms embargo, provided that it is comprehensive and that its effectiveness can be verified.

Finally, as a sponsor of the draft resolution, Egypt hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): We have our debate on Afghanistan again; time passes, and year after year the tragedy continues unresolved in that war-stricken country. A noble people who had hoped to see peace after a decade of brutal occupation, have been occupied in a fratricidal conflict which keeps the prospect of peace ever distant, ever elusive. It is time, perhaps, to examine the whole question more thoroughly to see where all of us have gone astray in the search for a true future for that country.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his reports under agenda items 20 (c) and 43, entitled, respectively, "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan" and "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security". Both these reports need to be analysed in some detail in order to ascertain the validity or otherwise of their fundamental assumptions.

The report [A/52/536] on emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of Afghanistan appears to lack a sense of direction and vision and gives the impression that it is based on short-term objectives. One would even be justified in going further to say that its overall strategy is flawed and that it shows a lack of commitment on the part of the United Nations and its Member States to alleviate the sufferings of the innocent people of Afghanistan. Let me give a few indicative examples.

First, as regards the overall figures for rehabilitation and relief assistance, the report confirms that, while the General Assembly had called upon the international community to respond to the inter-agency consolidated appeal for $133 million for emergency humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance for Afghanistan for the period from 1 January to 31 December 1997, only $38 million, or well under one third of the total requirement, had even been pledged as of August 1997. This is hardly evidence of any credible commitment on the part of the international community to provide assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Secondly, as regards mine clearance, while the mine-clearance programme is in its ninth year of activity, only 115 square kilometres have been cleared of mines so far. At this rate, another decade would be required even to clear even the remaining 140 square kilometres of the high-priority mined areas, let alone to demine the whole country. With an average of 10 people being killed or injured by residual mines each day, another 33,000 would be killed over the next decade due to the mines left behind by the foreign occupation forces who devastated this country during their occupation of Afghanistan. It is obvious that a far more intensive effort has to be made to rid the country of all these millions of residual mines, say, in the next two or three years at the most. Those who laid these mines in the first place should be asked to come forward, share the burden of demining — not later, not conditionally, but now — and pay reparations to the families of the mine victims.

Thirdly, as regards food supplies, the World Food Programme (WFP), acting on behalf of the entire international community, provided food to less than 1.5 million Afghans during 1997. Compare that to the fact that Pakistan alone provided food to the same number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan during the same period. In addition, millions of dollars worth of subsidized wheat have been provided by Pakistan to the Afghan population inside Afghanistan. We have done so on our own, out of a commitment to a brotherly neighbour, and not as part of any self-appointed donor group, meeting as a cabal behind closed doors and trumpeting high-sounding

strategies and frameworks for totally inadequate and irrelevant assistance to Afghanistan.

Fourthly, as regards gender policies, according to the report,

> "As a result of the difficulty in reaching women beneficiaries, WFP limited its rehabilitation assistance from a planned 60 per cent of its 1997 food distributions to only 32 per cent". [A/52/536, para. 25]

We all know, or should know by now, the culture of Afghanistan, where women live either with their fathers, or husbands, or brothers or a close relative, but seldom alone. It is therefore through the men that food reaches women and children in Afghanistan; and yet this totally unconvincing argument has been used to justify cutting in half an already limited rehabilitation programme.

Fifthly, as regards the food-for-work programme, the report states in paragraph 26 that

> "Although food-for-work was performed almost exclusively by men in this traditional society, WFP provided a family ration that reached women and children indirectly."

In the very next sentence, the report states that

> "WFP did not provide any assistance through food-for-work in the area of education, an area in which discrimination against women and girls takes place".

In this manner, in the ultimate analysis, while confessing that food reaches women and children through men in a traditional Afghan society, a considered decision has been taken to deprive these innocent women and children of food.

Sixthly, as regards the field of education, the report states that, as a response to the discriminatory practices imposed by Afghan authorities, almost all United Nations education projects were suspended or were not implemented. In this manner, the male half of the population has also been kept illiterate. Two wrongs do not make a right. While we do not condone gender discrimination, we do not understand the logic of aggravating the misery of the civilian population of Afghanistan.

Pakistan rejects any linkage between international assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the restoration of peace in all parts of that country. It would be completely unjustified to hold the areas where peace exists hostage to those areas where fighting continues. There has been no fighting in more than three quarters of Afghanistan for over a year now. It is incumbent on the international community to immediately start rehabilitation and reconstruction work in those areas where peaceful conditions already exist.

I now turn to the second report [A/52/682], on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. This report has several inaccuracies, or is selective in its description of key issues. It can only be perceived as an apology for the inability of the United Nations and its Member States to help in the restoration of peace in Afghanistan. Despite its title, the report states virtually nothing about the implications of the Afghan conflict for international peace and security. Allow me to highlight some of the obvious errors in the report.

First, paragraph 5 of the report inaccurately describes Generals Dostum and Malik as joint leaders of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan. Everyone knows, or should know, that General Malik fled the country following the outbreak of fighting between him and General Dostum.

Secondly, the reference to gender discrimination in paragraph 15 does not mention that girls' schools are functioning in Kandahar and other areas of Afghanistan, that they have been visited by international observers, and that the Afghan authorities have agreed to the setting up of an equal number of schools for boys and girls with international assistance. There is also no mention of the Afghan Government's request for vocational education for women.

Thirdly, the reference in paragraph 17 to Pakistan's efforts to promote the peace process downplays the fact that Pakistan is the only country which has engaged with all sides in the Afghan conflict and has shuttled between all areas in order to bring the Afghan factions to the negotiating table. No other Member State has engaged so far in this fashion and with this degree of intensity with all the Afghan factions.

Fourthly, the remark in paragraph 17 that Pakistan and Iran are not seen by one or the other of the Afghan factions as impartial mediators could apply perhaps more

to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA) itself. Some UNSMA members belong to countries primarily responsible for the present state of affairs in Afghanistan. It is obvious that their advice would be tainted and their recommendations biased. The credibility of the United Nations as an essential catalyst in finding a solution to the Afghanistan situation depends on the absolute neutrality and even-handedness of UNSMA.

Fifthly, paragraph 18 describes the situation regarding the availability of arms and ammunition in Afghanistan in a most selective manner. The fact is that billions of dollars in weapons and ammunition were left behind by the retreating forces of the former Soviet Union. Similarly, the reference to the existence of an unidentified foreign military training unit of several hundred persons near Kabul is both speculative and incorrect. An outfit of this dimension cannot be concealed.

These are but some of the inaccuracies in this report. More serious is the overall attitude of which they are the outward manifestation. The fact is that the United Nations has gradually marginalized itself in Afghanistan and lost credibility as an impartial mediator. This is unfortunate, for, in the opinion of my Government and that of most of us, it is essential that the United Nations play its full role in the multilateral effort to bring peace to Afghanistan and to embark on a process of relief and rehabilitation.

My delegation has on several occasions in the past, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly, outlined the underlying causes of the conflict in Afghanistan. It is therefore not my intention to dilate on those points again, but to focus my statement on the recent developments in Afghanistan and on how the international community could help the Afghans in restoring peace to their country in the light of these developments.

There have been both positive and negative developments in Afghanistan over the past year. The positive developments include the happy establishment of contacts between the Afghan parties themselves, the exchange of prisoners among them, and the decision by the Kabul Government to ban drug trafficking. The negative developments include the shocking discovery of mass graves of executed Taliban prisoners in the northern part of Afghanistan and the food shortages in the central part of Afghanistan.

The Taliban authorities in Kabul, the Jumbish-e-Milli, and Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud's faction have been in fairly close contact in recent days. These contacts have yielded positive results as the Taliban have released prisoners belonging to the Jumbish-e-Milli, while both General Dostum and Commander Massoud have released Taliban prisoners. There are good prospects that this initial confidence-building measure will broaden out into a political dialogue, ultimately leading to the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

The second welcome development has been the decision of the Kabul Government to ban poppy cultivation and to start a crop substitution programme with the help of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). Both the Kabul authorities and the Executive Director of UNDCP, Mr. Pino Arlacchi, should be congratulated for this breakthrough, the latter most particularly for having engaged courageously and meaningfully with the Kabul Government.

The most serious of the negative developments has been the recent discovery of mass graves of executed Afghan prisoners near Mazar-i-Sharif. Regrettably, while the Afghan authorities had been bringing to international notice ever since July this year the fact that their emissaries and prisoners captured in Mazar-i-Sharif were being systematically massacred, no attention was paid to their pleadings. The outcome of this callous indifference was the recent discovery of 20 mass graves of 2,000 Afghan prisoners. This is nothing short of genocide, but there has been no international clamour on this issue. On the contrary, there have been attempts by some international civil servants to cover-up their inaction by describing these as the graves of those mostly killed in the ongoing intra-Afghan conflict.

I draw the attention of the Assembly to the briefing given today in Geneva on the subject of the visit to Shebergan by the Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan, Mr. Choong-Hyun Paik. Here was how the massacres were described in that briefing:

> "The manner of death was horrendous. Prisoners were taken from detention, told they were going to be exchanged and then trucked to wells — of a type used by shepherds. They were thrown into the wells alive, those who resisted were shot and then tossed in. About nine wells were used. The depth was 10-30 metres with another 10-15 metres of water. Shots were fired into the well and hand grenades thrown in before the top of the well was bulldozed over. The Special Rapporteur found both bullet casings and pins from hand grenades.

...

"In other areas near Shebergan and north of Mazar-i-Sharif there were shallow graves with body parts evident on surface. The Special Rapporteur visited five or six shallow grave sites. At one place, there was evidence that the prisoners were lined up and mowed down with heavy calibre machine guns. Again the Special Rapporteur saw shell cases at the grave sites.

"... virtually all the bodies recovered from the shallow graves had their arms tied behind their backs with scarves, bandages or wire."

Not only should the United Nations take due cognizance of this heinous crime now, but those responsible for the cold-blooded massacres should be tried for war crimes in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Infringements, whether they take place in Afghanistan, in occupied Kashmir, in Bosnia or elsewhere, should be unreservedly condemned in the strongest possible terms.

The second negative event has been the food crisis in central parts of Afghanistan. This food crisis was generated by the looting of United Nations food storage facilities in Mazar-i-Sharif by some Afghan factions. This crisis deepened when the United Nations was not allowed to transport food supplies by overland routes to Bamyan. Pakistan, for its part, has allowed the World Food Programme to airlift its wheat reserves from Peshawar to Bamyan. We would suggest that some of the aircraft from other neighbouring countries, reportedly being used for war-related purposes, should also be diverted for the airlifting of food supplies to Bamyan. We also appeal to all Afghan parties not to impede the supply of food items to innocent civilians.

While we continue to believe that the primary responsibility for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan lies with the Afghans themselves, the international community should assist them more meaningfully to achieve this goal. It is now more important than ever for the international community to show its neutrality in the Afghanistan conflict by, first, adopting the vacant-seat formula in the United Nations in respect of Afghanistan; secondly, imposing an arms embargo to facilitate a ceasefire; thirdly, carrying out an immediate investigation of the execution and burial in mass graves of Taliban prisoners near Mazar-i-Sharif, leading to the establishment of a war crimes tribunal and action against those responsible for the war crimes; and, fourthly, simultaneously beginning the enormous task of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. These measures would jump start the peace process leading to the settlement of the Afghan issue.

It is high time that the United Nations follow the lead of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in adopting a vacant-seat formula, until such time as a broad-based Government is established in that country. This would provide an incentive to the Afghans to reach a peaceful settlement among themselves.

Regrettably, however, the Credentials Committee has apparently taken two opposite decisions in two similar cases. While the Credentials Committee received two sets of letters of credence in respect of the credentials of Cambodia and Afghanistan, in the case of Cambodia it decided to defer its decision on the matter on the understanding that, for the time being, no one would occupy the seat of that country at the fifty-second session. In the case of Afghanistan it also decided to defer its decision, but on the understanding that the current so-called representatives of Afghanistan could somehow continue to participate in the work of the General Assembly. How would the large majority of Afghans view this unequal and biased decision of the world body, and can the United Nations hope to play the role of an impartial intermediary under these circumstances?

This decision also deprives the General Assembly and the Security Council of hearing the view of the largest and most populous party in Afghanistan, which currently occupies two thirds or more of its territory and which is in full control of its capital. Until we hear them, our discussions here in the United Nations will continue to be ill-informed and incomplete. Vacating the seat would be one way to correct this anomaly. The Security Council should listen to the views of the authorities in Kabul in order to have a more balanced view of the situation in Afghanistan. This could be easily done under the Arria formula.

The second important step which could pave the way for the peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis is the imposition of an effective and verifiable arms embargo by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter. A voluntary arms embargo, on the other hand, would only be a charade and a meaningless exercise.

During the airing of informal views on the subject, a rather naive effort was made by some well-meaning individuals to expand the essential requirement of an arms embargo into an embargo on fuel supplies also. While this was duly rectified later on by the Secretary-General himself, it is necessary to place Pakistan's policy on the record. Fuel is the lifeline of the Afghan people. It is used for cooking and for heating, and any restrictions on it would impose unbearable hardships on the Afghan people. Pakistan's policy on this issue has therefore been crystal clear. We have always allowed unrestricted fuel supplies to go into Afghanistan. We did so for the defunct Rabbani regime when it was in power, despite the fact that we were not in agreement with its policies. We will continue to allow fuel supplies to move into Afghanistan under the current Afghan Government in Kabul, and will not be part of any ill-informed conspiracy to increase the misery of the Afghan people.

As the country which has suffered most from the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan, Pakistan has a vital interest in the restoration of durable peace there. As a consequence of the continued instability in Afghanistan, even today there are more than 1.5 million refugees in Pakistan. We stand almost alone in looking after these refugees in the face of donor fatigue and the unwillingness of the international community to contribute to their welfare. Pakistan has also been a victim of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan. Our access to Central Asia and the prospects for mutually beneficial economic collaboration with that region have not materialized.

We do not support a military solution. We continue to believe that a broad-based government is the only viable solution for a multi-ethnic Afghanistan. We have been in contact with all the Afghan parties — the Taliban Government in Kabul and the Northern Alliance alike. Prime Minister Mullah Rabbani, the leader of the Government in Kabul, has already visited Pakistan. Our Prime Minister also met Mr. Rabbani in Tehran and has invited him to visit Pakistan.

Pakistan has been engaged in a serious effort for some time now to bring the Afghan parties together around a negotiating table. We will continue with these efforts. We encourage others to engage all parties in the same fashion in an effort to restore peace and normalcy to Afghanistan.

There is an urgent need to facilitate an equitable settlement which takes due cognizance of realities on the ground, as well as the ethnic and demographic distribution of the population. Any solution that does not take both factors into account in a future dispensation will not bring durable peace to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the United Nations should endeavour to engage in a more impartial and committed fashion, try to revise its discriminatory policies, which are depriving the innocent Afghan people of education and food, and not wait for peace to be restored in all parts of the country before embarking on its rehabilitation work in areas which are already administered peaceably.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Bulgaria on a point of order.

Mr. Basmajiev (Bulgaria): I just want to state for the record that the delegation of Bulgaria wishes to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries on agenda items 20 (c) and 43.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have taken note of your statement.

We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform the Assembly that it is necessary to allow time for a review of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/52/L.68. Action on the draft resolution will therefore be taken at a later date to be announced in due time.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.